



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Pesticide applicators – Take steps to reduce drift during spraying season

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) would like to remind pesticide applicators of their responsibility to ensure pesticides do not drift off-target and offer suggestions on how to reduce the risk.

Last year, WSDA's [Pesticide Management Division](#) received more than 150 complaints regarding alleged violations of the state's pesticide laws, about half of them involving allegations that pesticides being applied in agriculture settings had drifted onto neighboring property. As of today, 13 pesticide drift complaints have been made to WSDA so far this year, including nine cases in which two or more people may have been exposed. All are currently under investigation.

To ensure that pesticides do not drift beyond the intended treatment area, pesticide applicators must:

- Read the label on the pesticides being applied and abide by all precautions and restrictions on safe handling, necessary protective equipment, buffers, the effect on crops and more.
- Be especially diligent near sensitive areas such as highways, homes, schools and other occupied dwellings or where workers are present.
- Properly calibrate equipment, using the proper nozzles and pressure to keep the spray on-target.
- Scout the areas bordering the area being treated.
- Evaluate conditions such as wind speed, wind direction, and temperature.
- Halt the application if conditions change such that the risk of drift rises to an unsafe level or if anyone approaches the area without proper protection.

WSDA licenses about 24,000 pesticide applicators, dealers, consultants and inspectors. Licensees are trained to apply pesticides safely. When problems do occur, WSDA will investigate complaints alleging violations of the state's pesticide laws, including cases of drift, worker exposure, or environmental harm.

To file a complaint, email compliance@agr.wa.gov or call toll free to 1-877-301-4555. Be sure to have as much information as possible regarding the incident to share with the investigator. WSDA strives to respond to all cases of possible human exposure within 24 hours and all other complaints within 48 hours.

The state Department of Health investigates potential cases of [pesticide illnesses](#). Visit their website at www.doh.wa.gov for more information.

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